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Oscar F. Dimlin

Death and the Life Beyond

Death and the Life Beyond

BY

JAMES REED

HENRY CLINTON HAY

PASTORS OF THE

BOSTON SOCIETY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

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Oh, shrine of God, that now
Must learn itself with awe !
O, heart and soul that move
Beneath a living law !
That which seemed all the rule
Of Nature, is but part ;
A larger, deeper law,
Claims also soul and heart.

The common death of all,
The life renewed above,
Are both within the scheme
Of that all-encircling love !
The seeming chance that cast us hither,
Accomplishes His whence and whither !

— *Palgrave's "Reign of Law."*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Note	ix
I Death as an Orderly Experience of Man 3	
By JAMES REED	
II The Resurrection	17
By H. CLINTON HAY	
III The Spiritual World	35
By JAMES REED	
IV Children in Heaven	51
By H. CLINTON HAY	
V Heaven	71
By JAMES REED	
VI The Lord and the Angels with Men . 87	
By H. CLINTON HAY	
VII The Lord's Merciful Care of the Evil . 107	
By H. CLINTON HAY	

NOTE.

The following sermons were recently preached in the regular course of pastoral duty. The favor with which they were received led to the belief that they might prove useful to others beside those who heard them. Accordingly they are now presented in book form. There seems to be a somewhat wide-spread feeling in the community, that the New Church has a special message to deliver on the subject of which they treat. The subject itself is of universal interest. All men know that sooner or later they will leave this world ; and there are none to whom the outward separation from friends through death is not a familiar experience. Nothing, therefore, can be more precious than definite knowledge concerning the future life and the relation of the two worlds with each other. That such knowledge is to be found in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and is there confirmed, not only by his own personal testimony, but by the evidences of the Scriptures themselves and of a true science and philosophy, is our sincere conviction. In hopes that these discourses, published as the fourth series of "Bennett Lectures," will bring light and comfort to many minds, this little book goes forth on its mission.

The earlier volumes of the series, still in print, are as follows :

“Light on Current Topics.”

“The Bible, Is it the Word of God?”

“Earthly Problems in Heavenly Light.”

I

**Death as an Orderly Experience
of Man**

REV. JAMES REED

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

—John xii. 24.

IN these words of our Lord we are taught that death is an orderly step in human development. Yea, it is only by passing through death to life that any real progress can be made. The theory of evolution is unquestionably true, so far as it is understood to mean that whatever has served its purpose, and become unfit, passes away, while that which springs out of it survives. Our text furnishes a striking and beautiful illustration. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, in order that the new plant may live. It must cease to exist as a seed, before it can exist in a higher form. Not till it has thrown off its dry husk, can it rise into the air and sunshine. This is but one among the many examples which nature affords. The case is the same with the caterpillar changed to a butterfly. It winds around itself a cocoon, and is, as it were, dead. But out of that seeming death ascends a more glorious life. An egg is an inert, and apparently lifeless, thing. Left to itself, it comes to nothing, but decays and putrefies. Only under the influence of heat does it fulfil its appointed

destiny. But when that influence is brought to bear upon it in the right way and at the proper time, we behold a transformation, which is no less wonderful, because it is familiar. A living, moving, creature has taken its place, and the egg is nowhere to be found. Nothing but a few bits of shell remain to show that it ever existed.

So is it with that change which comes to every human being, and to which, in our shortsightedness, we give the name of death. It is simply the process whereby a more advanced stage of life is attained. The natural body is laid aside and dissolved into its earth elements; but the man himself enters on a new period in his career. So far as we consider the subject rationally, this view of it will become more and more evident. We shall see that the dark and hopeless idea of death which men, even men of the church, have entertained in the past, was due to their purely natural and external states of mind. They were unable to lift their thoughts above the plane of matter and sensation. All that they saw was the death of the body; everything beyond was wrapped in uncertainty. Though they professed belief in immortality, yet was that belief enveloped in a great cloud of doubt. Death in itself was regarded as a misfortune and a curse, an untoward event consequent upon the sin of our first parents. Hence we find Milton writing,—

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe.

Thus literally has the church interpreted the saying addressed to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof (that is, of the tree of knowledge), thou shalt surely die."

Coupled with this interpretation of Scripture has been the doctrine of the resurrection of the body at some indefinite future time upon this earth. It has been believed that in some marvellous manner the flesh and bones of our material frames would be brought together and live again in a last day of judgment. These bodies may have crumbled to dust, or been burned with fire, or blown to atoms; yet would they be restored to life just as they were at first. This doctrine, though belief in it is better than no belief at all, has naturally seemed so strange and incomprehensible, that it has had small effect in relieving death of the gloom and sadness with which it was surrounded. Men have still regarded it as a calamity, have shrouded themselves in black when it occurred, and have continued to mourn and weep. Spiritual things have been to them so unreal, and the other world apparently so far off, that their thoughts have rested with the body in the grave, and they could not be comforted.

It has sometimes been said that the Old Testament is without any direct literal teaching of immortality.

The truth of this statement may well be doubted, but the question need not be argued here. This at least is certain, that, when our Lord was living on earth, there were, among the Jews, some who believed in the resurrection of the dead, and others who denied it. That the views of all men on the subject were grossly obscure, is equally plain. A remarkable instance, not often noticed, is afforded by the Lord's disciples themselves. In the Gospel of Matthew we read, "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." The apostles heard one part of His declaration, but not the other. Their hearts were saddened by the announcement of His coming death, but they seem to have taken no account of the promise that He would rise again. Neither then, nor afterwards, when He repeated the assurance, did they apparently notice it; still less did they draw from it any comfort. Not till the prediction was actually fulfilled, and He had risen from the dead, did the light dawn upon them. Then they heard Him say, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And slowly they began to

understand that His kingdom was not of this world, and that by means of His death and resurrection that kingdom was established. So He, by laying down His natural life, ascended into a life that was infinitely glorious. Let our text be read together with the verse preceding, and all this teaching is seen to be involved in it. "Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

This doubt and incredulity of the disciples concerning their Lord may well serve to illustrate the feelings which men in general have had, when any one whom they loved has been removed from their outward sight. They have seen the natural side of the event, and nothing more. When they laid the body in the ground, they have felt that the very end had come. But if they had been as mindful of the Divine promises as they were of their own loss and disappointment, how different would have been the case with them! If they had thoroughly believed that death was an orderly process in human experience, appointed by the Lord in His goodness and wisdom as the gateway to a higher life, their hearts would have been filled with peace and assurance, or even, in many instances, with joy and thankfulness. Knowing that our Father doeth all things well, and

living in the consciousness of His presence, we ought not merely to yield a reluctant submission to His will, but should rejoice that His will, and not ours, is done. When the time comes, as it surely must, in which all things will be viewed in the light of His eternal truth, there will be no more mourning over the death of the natural body, than there now is over the death of seeds which are sown. For belief in the continuance of life hereafter will be so strong and positive, that all thoughts will be concentrated on the spirit rising from the body, just as they always have been on the crops which spring from the dying seeds.

And yet we cannot feel that natural death, however great may be man's faith, will ever be regarded with indifference. We shall always be mindful of the changed conditions which it causes in this world; nor was it intended that we should not. Those conditions may, and generally do, involve earthly trials and hardships. The head of a large family is taken away, and they lose their means of support. Or little children are suddenly left without a mother's care. The separation of friends who have grown into a relation of mutual helpfulness is not easy to bear, though they know that it is only external and temporary. So death may bring the same kind of natural affliction as is caused by any other trying circumstances. It likewise gives fitting occasion for the expression of tender sympathy.

But these considerations do not alter the fact that in itself it is a normal event, designed by infinite love for man's eternal good. And so far as we are in the true order of our being, we shall feel that such is the case. Even when our sense of loss is keenest, there will be deep down in our hearts the certain assurance that all is as it should be, and that there can be no mistakes in the dispensations or the laws of Divine Providence. Our life here was intended for a blessing. The life beyond was intended for a blessing. Nor any less blessed should be the passage from the one to the other.

It is our privilege to know that the other world, where we are to live after the death of the body, is not far away. But it is ever present with us. It is round about our own souls. We are living in it now. For it is an inner, spiritual world, and no less real because it is unseen. Who is so grossly natural in his thought as to suppose that the body of a man is the man himself? What we love in a friend is not his outward person, but his mind and character. These are manifested in and by his person, but are themselves invisible. They belong to that part of his nature which is rightly called spiritual. And this is the same as saying that they belong to the spiritual world. He himself is a spirit, an inhabitant of that world. Though at first he is clothed with an earthly body, which is the seat of his consciousness, and which, while it lasts, makes

this outer world to be the scene of his activities, he is, nevertheless, a spiritual being in essence and reality. This means that the inner or spiritual world is his true and abiding home. When the body dies he finds himself consciously living there.

The Scriptures, if we read them aright, are perceived to be full of this teaching. They tell how spirits and angels, all unseen, are associated with men. What more striking evidence could we have of this fact than that which is afforded by the experience of Elisha's servant? He and his master were in a certain place surrounded by their enemies. We read that "an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. 'And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

Are we to consider this an exceptional case? Or does it proclaim a general law? Surely the latter conclusion is the only tenable one. If we accept it, we are able to see how it was that angels so often appeared to patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and others mentioned in the Bible narratives. They did not come flying down from some remote region of space.

But the eyes of those who beheld them were opened, and they saw. What eyes were these? Not, indeed, the eyes of their natural bodies (for those eyes were already open), but eyes whereby they had an inner sight, and looked into another world. They were the eyes of the spiritual body, of which Paul speaks, saying, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." All of us have both of these bodies. The former serves us for temporary use on earth. In the latter we continue to live forever in the spiritual world.

Thus plainly are we taught of the reality and nearness of that world, and it becomes clearer than ever that death is a perfectly normal experience. The outer consciousness ceases, the inner consciousness begins. The natural eyes are closed, the spiritual eyes are opened. Impressions are no longer received through the natural body, but all the senses and faculties of the spiritual body are brought into exercise. The transition is quiet and gentle. One goes to sleep in this world, and wakes up in the other. He can no longer see his earthly companions, but he comes into the visible presence of heavenly friends and helpers. Yea, he finds himself in the company of the great multitude of men and women who have been passing out of this world from the beginning of creation. Few are those whom he leaves behind, as compared with those whom he now meets. Among these last are all

whom he has loved on earth, and who have gone before him. Why should any one dread a change like this? We may, indeed, dread the pain and sickness by which it is often preceded. But as for the change itself, it is no more to be feared than any other process in the Divine economy of life. A wonderful fact, to which physicians and nurses have frequently attested, is that, however much their patients may have shrunk from death in anticipation, this feeling, when the time actually arrived, would wholly disappear, and perfect readiness for the event, with a peculiar peace and contentment, would take its place. Can we doubt that He who in His infinite goodness and wisdom withdraws the spirit from the body, also provides that the transition shall be made painless and happy by the protecting influences which proceed from Him and His angels? "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Not only the voices of Scripture, but all rational and practical considerations, lead us to the conclusion that death is an orderly step in human development, and takes place for the sake of a higher life. A man passes through all the stages of earthly existence from infancy to old age, and then, as we say, he dies. During this period, if his life has been a true and normal one, he has been gathering rich stores of wisdom and experience. His physical powers may have weakened; his body may be infirm

and decrepit, but his mind or spirit, that is, he himself, is stronger than ever. His ability to help his fellow-men was never so great as it is now. Is it reasonable to suppose that all this strength of character, all these qualities of heart and intellect, perish in the grave, and remain only as a memory, to be transmitted from one earthly generation to another? Or shall we believe rather, that he has been preparing for endless usefulness and service, laying in this life a sure foundation for life eternal? Which of these alternatives is the more consistent with faith in a loving and wise God?

There is indeed no intelligent way of solving the problem of the universe, which does not rest on the belief that man is an immortal being, with measureless capacities and possibilities which cannot be realized on earth. The sufferings and privations of this world would seem utterly incomprehensible, if they had not their compensations in the life hereafter. They could not be permitted by a kind Providence, unless He had eternal ends in view. The next life is therefore the real life for which we were created. We were born first into this world, in order that we might be born again into the other. Death is the outward token of that later birth. Who shall say that, coming in the Lord's good time, it is not expressive of His love and care for men? "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

II

The Resurrection

REV. H. CLINTON HAY

I am the resurrection and the life.

—John xi. 25.

THESE are wonderful words—the most wonderful, perhaps, that have ever been uttered. Upon them the Christian religion rests, for as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 COR. xv. 13, 14). For speaking these words, and doing the deed which followed in confirmation of them, the Lord was crucified. He had the power thus to lay down His life for His friends, and if He had not had the power to take it again for them, the Christian Church never would have had its existence and its history. These words and these facts have been essential to the faith of Christians from the beginning, and Christians are strong or they are weak according to their faith in them. For the Lord teaches that His kingdom is not of this world, that in this world men shall have tribulation, and that only through forsaking the things of this world, through death and the resurrection to a higher life with Him, can they enter His kingdom. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of love and wisdom within the spirit, and above

the limitations of time and space, to come into the full possession and enjoyment of which one must pass out of the realms of nature.

Therefore, natural science and all man's knowledge derived from the senses of the earthly body fail at the portal called death. Many inferences may be drawn for or against immortality, but no positive conclusions can be reached. To say that there is no resurrection, because it does not appear to our senses, therefore, is an assumption wholly unscientific and dogmatic, for it is assuming that we already know all the conditions of existence possible. It shuts the mind to all further discovery of truth in this direction. That the earthly body dies and returns to its elements is a matter of scientific observation and easy demonstration, but that the man himself ceases on that account to love and think, plan and execute, in his own world of love and wisdom and spiritual expression, is an inference without the slightest warrant from observation and experience. Indeed, there are many considerations which lead to opposite conjectures. For the conservation of matter and of force is a fundamental law of natural science. Nothing is ever lost in nature — not a grain of sand, not an atom of hydrogen, not a foot-pound of energy — but only transformed. Should we not infer, then, that the higher organisms and forms of energy, called mental and spiritual, should persist also, however transformed?

Science teaches a progressive evolution of higher from lower forms in all these changes of the natural universe. If this is not true of species, but still is true of the ascent of uses, should we not expect, as John Fiske so clearly pointed out in his essay, "The Destiny of Man," that when the culmination of this evolution of natural uses has been reached in the mind of man, and all lower forms are seen to have their crowning uses in supporting and serving human thought and affection, a spiritual evolution—an evolution of the man himself in spiritual uses—should continue beyond and above the natural, bringing him to a perfection which is never attained, and never can hope to be attained, under the limitations of a time-and-space world, and of a material body with its brief periods of growth and decline and its liability to accidents and disease?

Moreover, the constant law of progress, even in this world, science has discovered, is by death and resurrection. "The tomb of the past is the womb of the future." All nature continually dies in order to live; the tissues of every organism perish in the performance of their functions, but spring into renewal by this very process—idleness results in atrophy. Preservation is perpetual creation. The universe is continually dying, and its preservation and progress marks the progress of the Creator's triumph over death. Thus natural science always stands in the presence of the resurrection, of the

victory of life over death in nature. It can easily infer that the same law prevails and the same victory continues in the realm of spirit. But all this is inference, not knowledge. The grave closes when the earthly body dies, and all is dark and silent before the eyes of natural science; it cannot penetrate that gloom; it can only stand helpless, and hope that there is a resurrection for our loved ones and for ourselves beyond the grave.

At this point the Lord meets us with Divine revelation and fills the tomb with the light of His own risen and glorified presence. Then, in that light, we may behold every grave opened, every soul raised up to live with Him in His resurrection. Thus He is recognized as the God of nature and of spirit. Even the winds and the sea obey Him. All power is His in heaven and earth, according to His gospels.

Two books are needed and given for the enlightenment of men. One is called the book of nature and the other that of revelation. In one He teaches us of natural life and death; in the other, of the resurrection and the life beyond. Therefore, He says with equal truth of our experiences here and of the experiences which await us hereafter, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Now, can we not see the meaning of the words which follow, "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and

believeth on me shall never die." He who believes, who reads, understands, and lives what He has revealed in His book of nature has the power of His truth for life in this world; and he who believes, who reads, understands, and lives what He has revealed in His Bible has the power of His truth for the resurrection and for the life beyond. All depends upon belief on Him.

But it is not, and cannot be, a blind, ignorant, irrational belief if it is to meet the needs of a man — a rational, free, active, loving child of God. Therefore, the need of study and of practice both in natural and in spiritual science. For the word *science* is from a Latin word meaning *to know*: to fully know anything we must understand it and live it.

The Lord reveals to us in nature a world in which our earthly bodies live. It is a world of phenomena, we say; but the causes of these phenomena are hidden. We call them force, energy, life, but in naming them we do not explain them. Natural science can never understand them; it can only know them; know that they exist, and study and understand and obey the laws of their operation in this world. But in the Bible the Lord reveals to us another world in which our souls live; and if we study and understand the Bible as a spiritual book, we find that this other world is the world of causes, the world of life and energy itself; and we learn

that these two worlds are related to each other as the soul to the body in man.

Thus we find that there are two ways of studying man and the universe, "the microcosm and the macrocosm"—one is to study his body and his natural life; the other to study his soul and his spiritual life. So it is with the Bible. Much can be gained by studying the letter in the light of good earthly purposes, but there is a deeper spiritual meaning within that of the letter, the very soul, the spirit of it, which can be read by means of a knowledge of the correspondence between natural things and spiritual. This is the Divine style, which distinguishes the Bible from every human style of composing a book.

We cannot go into this subject further at this time, for we are not now considering the Bible, how it is written and inspired as the Word of the Lord, except in relation to the resurrection. But this much I have touched upon in order to show how the New Church receives its knowledge of the resurrection and the life beyond. It is not from the dreams, nor the imagination, nor the "mastodon" intellect—as Emerson says—and scientific attainments of Emanuel Swedenborg; but it is from the Bible as unfolded in its deeper spiritual meanings for him and for us by the Lord. This mission of receiving a knowledge of the Divine style in which the Word of the Lord is written, this knowledge of

correspondence, or the relation of cause and effect, between the spiritual world and the natural, came to Swedenborg on account of his eminent attainments in natural science it is true. He had studied with devotion and with exceptional success, under Divine Providence, the natural sciences; and thus was qualified to study the sciences of the spiritual world, and learn the relations of cause and effect between them; and, then, in the light of this knowledge of their correspondence, to learn the spiritual meaning within the letter of the Sacred Scriptures. In order to do this it became necessary for him to go through the experiences of death and resurrection, and of the life beyond; and still retain such connection with his earthly body as would permit his return to the use of it; that he might study the Bible in the letter, and behold the wonderful illumination given to it by the light of these spiritual experiences. Thus he was taught by the Lord from His own Divine Word, in a perfectly simple and rational way. And the very first thing that he learned was this wonderful truth contained in our text, that the Lord Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He saw that it means not only that He alone can raise men from the death of selfishness, sin, and evil, and give them His own pure love of others to be in them the undying life, usefulness, and happiness of heaven; but he saw that it also means that the Lord Jesus, in His risen and glorified Divine-human personality, is the

one true, living God of heaven and earth, and that, as He alone can give life and operate all the resurrections which preserve life and make it progressive, so He alone can raise men up, when the body dies, into the conscious life of the spiritual body in the spiritual world.

In order that this might be fully understood, Swedenborg's training as a man of natural science was employed in observing and carefully recording the successive steps of the resurrection. In his work entitled "Heaven and Hell," this record is found. He tells us of the guardian angels who are always with us, provided by the Lord; and of good spirits, under their direction, who minister to our states of affection and thought. Our earthly condition is not perceived by them, it can be inferred only by the changing states of our spirits. Nor are we conscious of their presence. But when we are happy in what is good they rejoice with us and fill our thoughts with the light of their wisdom, and our hearts with the warmth of their love. When suffering comes through disorders of the mind or body they help us to learn the lessons of it, and minister to our comfort in every possible way. But when death approaches these spirits are removed, and the angels of the resurrection draw near. They take away the fear of death and help the sufferer to fall into a peaceful sleep. Then they infuse their states of heavenly love into the mind, and in doing so bear

the soul up through all the heavens — not through space, for heaven is not found in earthly space, nor is the spirit subject to its laws, but to those of changing states of thought and affection instead. Thus the soul of every man, no matter how evil the life in which he is when death overtakes him, is borne upward into the innocence and peace of his infancy, when His angels were those who “always behold the face of the Father in heaven”; for it is only in states of entire innocence that a human soul can come unharmed into the immediate presence of the Lord and His highest angels. But only in His immediate presence, and by His Divine power alone, as we have seen, can any soul be raised from death.

This leading back of the spirit through all the states of its life to that of its innocent beginnings requires until about the third day of earthly time. Therefore the Lord Himself rose from the tomb on the third day as the perfect type. So about the third day the soul is separated from the earthly body, and awakened from the most blissful sleep it has ever experienced. First a covering seems to be rolled away from the face, and a soft, diffused light gently greets the eyelids of the spiritual body, inviting them to open to the glories of heaven.

But most of us are not yet ready to see in that light, so we retrace our steps as it were, or gravitate back to our own natural states of thought and affection. And since sight in the spiritual world is in

the reverse order of sight in this, we can see only in the light of our own thoughts. Spiritual sight begins with an internal perception, and thence follows an external sensation which corresponds. Therefore, as we pass down through the heavens we are seen, but do not see, unless we are prepared already, by the cultivation of heavenly knowledges, to recognize the society of angels to which we belong, and in which we are to find our eternal homes—the place in the Father's house of many mansions which He has been enabled, by our obedience to Him, to prepare for us.

Nevertheless, we are recognized by our angel friends, our spiritual neighbors, as we pass down through the heavens. They never lose sight of us, and never cease, unseen, to attend and guard us, no matter through what wanderings and self-revealing experiences we must pass before we are prepared to return to them. They never leave us, but we descend to our old-time states of life in the world, before we recover full possession of consciousness.

And now the marvelous gentleness of the Lord's Divine fatherhood appears. In order that there may be no shock in experiencing this great change, He provides that we shall recover consciousness as if awakening from a refreshing sleep. If we have died in a sick-bed, or have lost consciousness in our homes or elsewhere, we take it up again just there; and at first no change is noticed; our friends seem

to be about us ; and so they are, but not our earthly friends. They are the ministering spirits who have been with us unseen before the death of the earthly body, and with whom we are perfectly at home, therefore, in spirit. With wonderful skill given by the Lord and His angels they break the news of what has come to pass so gradually and gently that we are not troubled. Indeed, many rejoice, when they learn that they have died, to find that they still have bodies in the resurrection, with parts and members which resemble those left behind and have similar uses : and soon they begin to realize that these spiritual bodies are better far than the natural ones from which they have been separated — more perfect vehicles of expression and of service for the mind. Thus they discover that earthly diseases and infirmities have not affected them, and that all the limitations imposed by the very nature of a grosser organism, formed from the dust of the earth, which in itself is dead, no longer exist. They find, instead, that the spiritual body is composed of spiritual substances which are the forms, not of death, but of life itself, since the spiritual body is the soul's own organism, vibrating in every bone, tissue, and nerve, with the soul's own thoughts, affections, and delights.

Then, of course, loved ones who have gone before into this other world are thought of ; and affections for them awaken into desires to see them,

and that brings them. For thought with affection is the law of presence in the spiritual world.

Here on earth telepathy, or thought transference, is just beginning to be recognized as a possibility for the mind ; it can take place, however, only by escape from the fetters of the grosser forms of matter and by directing the vibrations of an atmosphere purer than that of air or ether. It brings us into the borderland between mind and matter, between the natural and the spiritual worlds, and is, therefore, fraught with dangers from hidden enemies. Here on earth we have advanced from the stage coach to the steam engine and the electric motor as means of securing the presence of our friends ; and we have the wireless telegraph and telephone just coming into use as means of communication with them. We are learning to soar above the grosser forms of matter, in the effort to escape their limitations, and to meet in the purer substances of higher atmospheres. But within and above all this are the still purer atmospheres of the mind and spirit itself awaiting us in the resurrection, where nothing of time nor space can separate those who think of each other with a loving desire to meet and dwell together.

Thus the resurrection is not a restoration to life on the same level. There would be no need of any kind of death in the Divine economy if it were ; but it is a separation and lifting up by Divine power

from a lower to a higher realization of life and its benefits.

With this thought of the resurrection the New-Churchman follows the casket of his loved ones to the grave. Tenderly he returns the dust to the dust of the earth, knowing that the soul, his loved one, will never need it again, for he has been lifted up into the higher, more blessed realizations of the life for which he has been created. And, although clouds of sadness must obscure the mind for a time in such external separations, he knows that the souls of those who love each other are never separated in their own spiritual world, and that they will be made conscious of each other's presence again in the resurrection. So we live on together in spirit and in truth. We complete our earthly work, while they are working with us in spiritual ways, and unseen are helping us.

In this light, also, the New-Churchman reads his Bible, the same Bible which his fathers read; but the light of heaven, in which he trusts his fathers now find new meanings in it, fills it with new and glorious meanings for him. In the letter he beholds the Lord Jesus as the resurrection and the life of heaven. His love for the little household at Bethany tells him of the heavenly Father's love for all His children. His lingering when called to save the beloved brother from death teaches that death may be, and is always intended to be, a blessing.

He calls it a sleep because it is the most blessed of all sleeping, from which He alone can awaken us to a glorious day in a higher life ; and so it is to the glory of God. But by it He seeks no selfish glory. It is for our sakes, not His own — in order that we may learn the greatness of His love for us in this mightiest expression of it, and so may be lifted into a higher love for Him and for one another as His children, and thus into that higher life which is heaven. The restoration of Lazarus to his friends assures us that the resurrection is the means of giving us to our friends in deeper, sweeter, holier intimacies ; that there is external and temporal loss only for the sake of internal and eternal gains.

But now we must notice that the restoration of Lazarus to life was not an instance of the resurrection. The same is true of all the other cases of restoration to life in both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures. They are only manifestations of the Lord's power over life and death, like His healing of diseases. They only illustrate and serve as object lessons and representatives of the resurrection. There is but one instance of the resurrection itself in all the Scriptures and in all human history, for the true resurrection, as we have seen, is a lifting up of the soul from a lower to a higher sphere of existence. Therefore, the only instance of it is given in the Lord's own resurrection, which lifted Him up, not only into company

with the angels, but also into complete oneness with the Father, the Infinite Creator and Sustainer, the Resurrection and the Life, upon the throne of God, from which He is omnipresent and omnipotent forever. But this one instance is enough for those who believe on Him, for His own Divine promise is, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." (JOHN xii. 32.)

III

The Spiritual World

REV. JAMES REED

And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. And he saith, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God.

—*Rev. xxii. 8, 9. (Revised Version.)*

THE Book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse, is the prophetical book of the New Testament. It was given to mankind through John the beloved apostle. It abounds in scenes and events which were witnessed in the spiritual world. Yea, from beginning to end, it brings that world to view. In the very first chapter John says of himself, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice." Turning to see whence the voice proceeded, he beheld "one like unto the Son of man"—his Lord and Master. From Him he received messages to "the seven churches which are in Asia." Afterwards he was seeing angels and cherubim, and communing with beings not of this world, until he pronounces the final benediction,

These things would have been impossible to him, unless he had been "in the spirit." That is to say, the sights which he saw, and the sounds which he heard, could not reach him through his natural senses. But his spiritual eyes and ears were opened, and what they revealed to him took place in the spiritual world. That world, as we have seen in previous discourses, is ever near. It is an inner realm of beginning, bearing the same relation to the physical universe, that our spirits bear to our bodies. It is invisible to outward sight, just as our own spirits are; but it can be made visible by the opening of the spiritual eyes with which every man is endowed. This is not a common experience, nor one to be sought or desired by men in general. While they live on earth, they have their own specific work to do, for which earthly life was given. To seek open intercourse with the other world is, as we are taught, disorderly and dangerous. But if it comes unsought, there is a Divine purpose in it, and it becomes lawful.

Such, it is needless to say, was the case with John, and with all others mentioned in the Scriptures as having had like experiences. The Lord made use of them to teach men things hidden from earthly sight. For this reason John "was in the spirit," or, in other words, in a state which brought his spiritual senses into exercise. He was, as it were, lifted out of the body, with power to perceive objects and

phenomena, of which the body is not conscious. Yet there was no miracle about the matter. Nothing occurred to him, which might not occur to any one, if there were occasion. He was no nearer to the other world when he had his visions, than we ourselves are now and always. His experience was unusual, but it took place in accordance with laws which are constantly operative.

In the light of these general considerations let us now turn to our text: "And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. And he saith, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God."

First, we may here notice John's reiteration of the fact that he actually heard and saw the things which he has described. As we proceed with our reflections, we shall have occasion to refer to some of those things. We do not forget that he was writing a book of prophecy relating to a certain period in human history, and that what he saw and heard was, therefore, in many respects unique, and different from anything that has been seen or heard by others. But the main point to be borne in mind is that his spiritual senses were really opened, and that he was thereby intromitted into the spiritual

world. Moreover his experiences make known in no uncertain manner conditions which always obtain in that world.

This fact is strikingly illustrated by the circumstance which next claims our attention. An angel had been showing to John the holy city descending from God out of heaven. There was something in his appearance, or in the effect produced by the wondrous vision, which led the apostle to fall down at his feet to worship him. But this act of obeisance was forbidden; and the reasons given are the plain statement of a general law. The angel said in substance, "You must not worship me, for I am only a finite human being like yourself." Such is the obvious meaning of his declaration that he was John's fellow-servant, and the fellow-servant of others who, like John, were engaged in the prophetic office; that he was, moreover, in the same class with those who "keep the sayings of this book," or, in other words, are learners and doers of Divine truth. There is but One who is worthy of worship; and He is the Lord God Himself. He alone is to be adored by men and angels, by the inhabitants of this world and the inhabitants of heaven. They all stand together as one great family in His sight.

It has been commonly supposed that angels are a wholly distinct race from men, that they were created separately, and placed in heaven, while men were appointed to be permanent dwellers on earth. They

have also been regarded as a superior kind of beings. Even devils or evil spirits have been understood to be fallen angels. But let the Scriptures be carefully searched, and they will be found not to teach any such doctrine. It is taught in "Paradise Lost," but not in the Bible. It is a natural inference from the mistaken belief that the death of the body is a disorderly and calamitous event, and that all who have died, are waiting to be raised again upon this earth at the sound of the last trumpet. For, if this belief were true, there could, indeed, be no *men* in heaven, and angels must be beings of another sort.

But our text, as we have seen, contradicts this hypothesis. The latter is likewise contradicted throughout all the Scriptures. The angels mentioned by Bible writers are always in the human form. We read, for instance, that the *angel* of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife; but afterwards, in speaking of him to her husband, she calls him "a *man* of God." So, too, in Matthew's Gospel, it is said of the women who sought Jesus' body in the sepulchre, that they saw "the *angel* of the Lord." But in Mark the language is "a young *man*." Luke speaks of two *men* on the same occasion, and John, of two *angels*. What, indeed, could be more evident to the reflecting mind, than that, when man, as the last created being, was made in the image, after the likeness of God, the climax had been reached; for surely there could be no creature

higher than one who bore the Divine image and likeness. Consider if this is not the plain teaching of revelation, beside agreeing with all the known facts of science and experience.

Man is thus a spiritual being, born with the capacity for endless existence in the spiritual world. That world is his real home. His life there is his real life. For a while he dwells in a natural body, which brings him into outward relations with the natural world. But, presently, through the death of that body, he wakes to consciousness in the eternal world. And there he finds himself living amid conditions which are perfectly adapted to him. He does not feel like one who has come into a strange country, but, rather, like one who has at last found his own country. No change has taken place in him. He is exactly the same being that he was before. He is in a human world, attended by human companions, with all things ministering to human states and needs. All this, and much more, follows from the fact emphasized by our text, that "heaven and hell are from the human race," or—what is the same thing—that there are no spirits and angels but those who first lived as men and women on some earth of the material universe.

The Book of Revelation shows that the other world abounds in objects similar to those which exist on earth. We find mention made, for example, of mountains, hills, rocks, seas, rivers, clouds,

horses, books, cities, trees, gold, and precious stones. All of which goes to show that the new comers to that world are surrounded by a familiar environment. The things which they behold around them are no less real and substantial, because they are spiritual. Yea, if we understood aright, we should see that the fact of their being spiritual makes them even more real and substantial. We cannot now go into particulars on this point. Suffice it, if we accept as our fundamental thought respecting the other world, its absolutely human character. It is not a region which will seem different from that in which we are at present living. It is not inhabited by beings of another race than ourselves. But those who dwell there are our own kith and kin, continuing, in a perfectly normal way, the life which they began on earth. It is true that the good and evil among them gradually go apart and remain apart from each other. But even the process of separation is a normal one—the result of their own free choice. The abode of the good is called heaven, and they are known as angels—literally “messengers”—or those who do the Lord’s errands and carry His influence to others. The abode of the evil is called hell, and they are known as devils, or evil spirits. But all are equally men, and all live under conditions such as men, in their varied circumstances, require.

With this thought in mind, let us proceed to con-

sider the several stages through which man passes after he awakes to full consciousness in the spiritual world, as we find them described in the writings of our church.

First, he is in precisely the same state in which he was when he left this world. If he died, as most men do, after a period of sickness, in which he looked forward to the coming change, he enters the other life with that expectation uppermost. So far as he has believed in continued existence after death, his waking is free from surprise. If his death is, as we say, sudden, so that he is unaware of it, he cannot know in which world he is, when, on the third day, he finds himself living. Naturally, he thinks that he is still on earth. From this belief he is aroused by seeing around him new forms and faces. The last thoughts which he had when he died are with him when he awakes. His mind, naturally, goes back at first to those whom he has left behind, and he also calls to remembrance the friends who have gone before. These he meets, and with them he holds communion.

But this is only the beginning. He needs to find a permanent home. And that home must be, not merely or mainly an outward habitation, but an abode where all the conditions, both internal and external, will be thoroughly congenial. No incongruous things can exist in it, and the influences which prevail must be such as minister to his

deepest nature. In the natural world we are necessarily exposed to contact with much that is inharmonious. Here the conflict between good and evil goes on continually, and we cannot escape from it. But when the final and eternal resting-place is reached, that conflict must have ceased. The only home which will ever satisfy our human need and longing is one where all our associates will be in similar states—that is, in perfect sympathy with ourselves and where the thoughts and desires of our hearts are in absolute agreement and correspondence with our visible environment. Such a home awaits every one in the spiritual world, even as our Lord says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions; If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”

But there are few who, on first entering the other life, are ready to go to their appointed places. All are, as we have seen, in the state in which they were when they left the natural world. But this means that most of them have an outer self and an inner self, which are more or less at variance with each other. Many who are good at heart, and thus essentially fit for heaven, have, outwardly clinging to them, derived from their contact with the world, ideas and habits which are far from heavenly. These must be removed before they will be ready to live among the angels. For instance, if, through bad associations, one has become accustomed to use

foul or profane language with all that it implies, he must be taught the evil of such things and led to put them away. Or, if he has, by no fault of his own, come under the influence of a false religion, he must be freed from that control, by learning to worship the God of heaven. Again, those who are inwardly evil may have acquired the outward habits of virtue and may appear to themselves and others altogether righteous. Such persons need to be stripped of all disguises before they can find their true spiritual abiding-places. For it is one of the prophecies concerning the permanent condition of men that "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." Is it not evident that in the real home of our spirits there can be no concealments, and that we must forever stand before the Lord and our fellow-men exactly as we are?

If, then, the life here is continued into the next life without change, it must, at first, in the great majority of cases, present a mixture of good and evil. Not only do good and evil men enter the other world together, but good and evil coexist in individual minds. This condition must needs last until the two opposing elements are separated, and the one or the other has complete dominion. While it does last, that state exists, which is known as "the state of the exteriors." A man may dissimulate and play the hypocrite, as he did in the natural

world. He can deceive himself and others, as he has been in the habit of doing. His true internal character is not yet revealed. His outer memory is active. He is, to all intents and purposes, as if he still lived on earth.

But this state cannot, in the nature of things, be of long duration. The natural body, while we live in it, may, to any extent, and for any length of time, be made to conceal our real thoughts and feelings. Not so the spiritual body. This, being formed of spiritual substances, and not of gross earthy matter, is the transparent medium of the spirit's life and soon shows itself to be such. Hence the power to think and will in one way, and to speak and act in another, is speedily lost. Thus the second state, or "the state of the interiors," begins. The inner life clearly betrays itself. The soul shines through its outer covering. The man, as he is in himself, is seen and known by all.

This is the final judgment. Nor is there need of any other. Those whose inmost thoughts and motives are brought to view, and read as in open day, have no occasion for a formal decree whereby they are received into heaven or condemned to hell. They are their own judges. With souls laid bare to the light of Divine truth, they voluntarily associate themselves with their like, and find their own congenial homes. No otherwise can they enjoy rest and liberty. The societies or communities thus

formed by the good constitute heaven, and those formed by the wicked constitute hell. It is needless to add that the two are as wide asunder as the poles. In this connection we may usefully remember our Lord's declaration: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Could any words teach more plainly than these, that heaven and hell are the result of man's own choice? And is not this the same as saying that hell would not exist unless there were those who deliberately turn away from heaven?

So this second state after death, is, as it were, a clearing of the atmosphere. By means of it all outward obscurities and incongruities are removed, and man acquires a complete sense of freedom. In the exercise of this freedom he goes to his eternal abode. He is drawn by inward ties, far stronger than any mere earthly relationship, to the society of those with whom he is spiritually akin, and with whom alone he feels entirely at home. Perhaps among them are the very angels who, during some period of his natural life, were his heavenly guardians. If so, he obviously cannot come into their presence

without knowing them as his dearest friends. Thus all things are brought into their true order. Those are associated with each other, who belong together. And this involves not only the general separation between the good and the evil, but a greatly diversified life in heaven or hell, after that separation has taken place. For, as we have already had occasion to remind ourselves, in our Father's house are many mansions.

One more stage remains for those who become angels, before they can be fully established in their final homes. It is that of instruction. They need to be divested of all earthly errors, and to learn the ways of heavenly wisdom. They must be taught whom to worship, and how to worship Him. It must be shown them in what the life and joy of heaven consist, and how they can become partakers in those things. In short, the preconceived ideas and prejudices which they have acquired in this world must be dispelled, and their ignorance enlightened. How great that ignorance is at the present day, is only too apparent.

But where do all the foregoing experiences occur? Neither heaven nor hell can be the scene of them, because they precede man's entrance into the one or the other. Accordingly they betoken a middle region between the two. This middle region is indeed implied by the fact that life there is a continuation, without essential change, of the life which

has just been ended on earth. It is called in the writings of our Church "the world of spirits." We may rightly think of it as the vestibule or entrance hall of the whole spiritual world. That there is such an interspace between heaven and hell is plainly shown in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, where Abraham, speaking to the rich man, says, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

There is no way of proving the truth of all these teachings by any personal observation or experience of our own. For our knowledge of them we are necessarily dependent on Divine revelation. But can any one fail to see how natural, how thoroughly human, they are, how perfectly in accord with what we know of men, and of the Lord's dealings with them in this world? And does not our text bear witness to their truth, by the assurance which it gives, that those who remain in this world and those who have gone before, are brethren and fellow-servants, one of another?

IV

Infants and Children in Heaven

REV. H. CLINTON HAY

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

— *Matthew xviii. 14.*

EXCEPT in the loss of a beloved husband or wife, death brings no sorrow so great as that experienced in the loss of young children.

Then this text, added to the one of a previous discourse, is most comforting. The words, "I am the resurrection and the life," as we have seen, break the silence of the grave and lift our loved ones out of the shadow of death into the light of the higher world, for which they have been created. But what an added comfort it is, when our hearts are bleeding from the separation of a life which seems to be a part of our very own, to receive from the same Divine lips the assurance that it is not the will of our Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. We know that when mothers brought their little ones to Him, and His disciples forbade it, He said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (MATT. xix. 14). We know how tenderly then He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them. Surely He revealed a Divine love for them as tender as any mother's

love. Aye, in the Old Testament Scriptures we are assured that it is even more tender, for we read, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (ISA. xlix. 15.)

With such assurances of His undying love for them, we can learn to bow our heads in submission to His Divine Providence, and suffer even our own little ones to come unto Him, and forbid them not even when it takes them away from our earthly homes to have them enter His heavenly mansions. But as long as love for them abides in our hearts we shall be interested to learn all we can about them, and we shall receive thankfully everything which the Lord will make known to us out of His Holy Word.

First, then, we notice that this text, like the other, has a great deal more than a literal meaning. For our little ones have perished in this world notwithstanding that it is not His will. It is estimated that a third of the human race die before they have become men and women. It is in accordance with reason to believe that it is the purpose of the Lord in creating, that all His children shall grow up in this world, and mature what belongs to the periods of childhood, youth, and manhood. It is not rational to suppose that illness, suffering, and premature death are in accordance with the will of our loving

heavenly Father. While we regard death as an orderly step in human development, essential to progress into higher forms of life, we can but regard accidents, and the unsanitary and evil conditions which hamper and shorten earthly life, as disorderly and contrary to the will and wisdom of our Lord. When the life of an unborn child is taken to save the mother from shame, and when the mother herself perishes in thus sacrificing her own child to hide her sin, the community is shocked by the long series of disorders and complications with evil which may be revealed; and we then know that it is not the will of our Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. Then we begin to realize the meaning of the words, "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth Me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh" (MATT. xviii. 5-8). The meaning doubtless is, that it is of Divine order to receive these little ones in the name of the Lord, and bring them up to believe in Him. But there is no clearer proof of human freedom and responsibility than is afforded by the fact that in this most sacred of all human relations His will often is not done on earth as it is in heaven.

Before the human race fell from its infantile innocence, and the Lord's will was done on earth as it is in heaven, marriage was sacred to one husband with one wife according to Divine order, for "He who made them at the beginning made them male and female; and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife" (MATT. xix. 4, 5). Little ones were then received in His name, and reared as His children. They lived happily, free from disease and suffering, and developed through all the periods of childhood, youth, and manhood the heavenly forms of character Divinely provided for them. There were no deaths of children then, no bereaved parents, no failures in character, and no disappointments in bringing up children worse than the bereavements of death; but after the ripening processes of a golden old age, each one fell asleep to awaken to the higher fruitions of life in heaven.

After the fall of humanity into the disorders of sin, His will was not changed. He had instituted death as an orderly means of transition to the higher life. He continued to employ it as such, and in permitting it to come earlier and earlier as the disorders of sin increased the permission was of His Divine mercy, for it put an end to the trials and suffering entailed by the sins of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation. To the sinful, clinging to the pleasures and selfish enjoy-

ments of the earth, it seemed a curse, a punishment visited upon sin, because it separated them from the riches and indulgences of this life, and checked their progress in evil. But it need not seem so to us, and it will not if we look beneath the outward appearances to the deeper meanings of the Divine love and wisdom operating in it. Indeed, when we consider the conditions of disorder, disease, and suffering which sin has brought into the world — the trials and struggles which must be endured, and the constant warfare with evil which must be waged by those who get any real good out of this life, we can not wish our loved ones to return to us through the portal called death ; we can better pray for strength to endure and work faithfully to the end, when we may go to them and receive their felicitations, added to the Lord's blessed words, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (MATT. xxv. 23.)

Especially is this true of our children who go "unspotted from the world." When we behold the dust flying in the air to blind their eyes, be breathed into their lungs, and cling to their garments if they were still here ; when we see the dreadful sights, and hear the foul language, and breathe the vile atmospheres, which shall never pollute their minds ; when those who might have been their companions are learning to indulge the senses with the complacency of tobacco, with the dangerous exhilarations of

the wine-cup, and with the not less dangerous intoxications of social pleasures intended to be recreations ; when those who might have been their associates in the business of this world are driven on by ambition, by greed, by avarice, by lust of power and position, or even by the ordinary conditions of getting what seems to be necessary for one's self and family in the hard competitions of the world to-day : then, can we be sure that our little ones could be kept free to do right and prepare for heaven under such earthly conditions ; can we wish them to leave their angel mothers, and the immediate presence of their heavenly Father, and their heavenly playmates, school-fellows, and friends, to return and live with us ?

Thus, if we rationally receive the Word of the Lord, we can know that death comes whenever it is needed to preserve human freedom — not to destroy but to save, because it is not the will of our Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

This will become the more manifest if we consider it in the light of His revealed purpose in giving life to His children. An earthly father, if he is worthy of the name, gives life to his child, and all that contributes to life, to make him happy ; and this because he loves him. And if he is at all wise he knows that the happiness of his child will depend upon his ability to be useful. Therefore he educates

and trains him in earthly uses. So our heavenly Father gives life to each of His children, and provides all that contributes to life, to make us useful and happy. But His love and His wisdom are not satisfied with the beginnings and the lower forms of happiness which can be secured in this world. He is constantly looking beyond time to eternity, beyond the transitory to the permanent, beyond the earth to heaven. All the activities of His fatherhood, therefore, are engaged in educating and training us for usefulness in heaven. Human hearts and minds must be educated and trained into the image and likeness of His own. It can be done only with their consent and cooperation. It can be done also only by means of human instrumentalities, such as parents, teachers, and associates ; for if He were to approach too near with the Divine glory of His own immediate presence the human mind would be overpowered, and could not exercise its faculties ; freedom to choose and reason to determine the choice would be lost ; thus all the possibilities of progress would be gone. Therefore the consent and cooperation of others, yes, of many others, are needed to come between in the education and training of the Lord's little ones for heaven. It is not His will that one of these little ones should perish, but how about the wills of all these others who must cooperate with Him in the doing of His will for the heavenly training of the child, and youth, and man ? The

problem quickly passes beyond all human comprehension, but is understood perfectly by the Lord when He permits death to cut short an earthly life. It may not be the fault of the parents that one of their children is taken and another left ; it may not be the fault of prospective teachers or earthly associates ; but the Lord knows when it is merciful to all, when earthly conditions have failed Him to such an extent that the time has come when death will be a blessing ; because it will preserve freedom and raise up His child into higher conditions of life.

In some respects it is easier for little children than for others to pass through death. For they have never left that state of innocence to which all must return for the resurrection. They have never left the spiritual presence of the highest angels, in whose midst every resurrection must take place. This we learn from the Lord's Word, for He says, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (MATT. xviii. 10). Therefore no waiting until the third day is needed for the resurrection of a little child. Nor does he soon, like adults, leave the company of these highest angels to descend into the world of spirits, there to get rid of the outward evils and falsities acquired by life in this world, for no matter what his inherited tendencies to evil, he has never chosen and made his own anything of them. The highest angels are his angels, and in their care his own innocence

makes him happy in the immediate presence of the Lord Himself. As soon as the Lord has separated him from his earthly body he is received into the bosom of an angel mother, who loves him more tenderly, and nourishes and cherishes him more wisely than any earthly mother possibly could. He looks up into her beautiful face, transfigured by the maternal affection which is given to those who dearly love children in earthly life — for all angels have once been men and women here — the baby looks up into her eyes lighted with tenderness, and he smiles and coos with delight. Such is the resurrection of the baby.

There is not so much difference at this early period as afterwards, for the same heavenly love flows from the Lord into the hearts of earthly mothers when they clasp innocent little ones to their breasts. Wordsworth struck the chords of one of the deepest truths of human experience when he sang, —

Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home.

In giving life the Lord gives His own pure love of others to every infant heart ; and He gives it to His highest angels, and to motherhood whether on earth or in heaven, to rejoice in this new gift of living

love ; and to awaken it, and call it out into activity, and develop it, by smiles and caresses, and by that wonderful baby-talk which means nothing to the intellect but everything to the heart.

Thus, whether living here or in heaven, all little ones receive this first implantation of pure love in their souls, which is the beginning of heaven within them. The Lord gives angels charge over it in every case to cherish it and see that it remains forever as the nucleus of their ability to become His angels, happy in His household.

Hence the baby easily passes from the arms of his earthly mother to those of his heavenly mother, and suffers nothing in the change ; only his mother is transfigured in his sight by fuller expressions of love and tenderness. Pure love in our hearts would be glad, for the baby's sake, to have it so ; but we cannot let our children pass even so to other mothers without pangs in our natural affections, and prayers that they still may be ours. How these prayers are answered will be considered in a subsequent discourse on "The Lord and the Angels with Men."

From this point on differences between the life of children in heaven and that on earth begin to appear and increase. For the education for heaven depends first of all upon knowledge of the heavenly Father. This is why the very first thing which a mother should teach her child on earth is to pray to that heavenly Father, and revere His Holy Word, and

keep His commandments, and love Him gratefully for all His blessings — for life, and home, and parents, and friends, and daily bread. But the earthly father must needs come between in the thoughts and feelings of the child, and long years pass, and often many hard experiences of humiliation must be suffered, before he can learn the lesson and transfer to the Lord the trust which he has transferred from his earthly father to himself while growing to manhood. With the child who grows up in heaven it is not so, for his home, as we have seen, is with the highest angels who live in the immediate presence of the heavenly Father. No other father is ever spoken of, or thought of, by any one there. Everything conspires to fasten the first thoughts of childhood upon Him and keep them so fastened. Every influence lifts the heart to Him as the supreme object of love and devotion. He is not seen, but He is never forgotten. It is known that He is never absent — always present — omnipresent — and that life and every faculty of loving, thinking, and doing, and every beautiful and useful object, every home with its furnishings, every garden with its flowers, every tree with the birds singing in its branches, every field, and stream, and mountain, the sunshine, and the sky full of glorious light, is His gift. Sometimes a Divine-Human form appears in the Sun to represent His presence there, or He so fills an angel with His Divine love and wisdom that

the angel's own personality is lost for the time in making His Divine presence known — as when He spoke by the angel of His presence to the patriarchs, to Moses and the prophets, and to the beloved John in Patmos vision.

Thus wonderfully, and beyond all earthly possibilities, are the children there taught this first and fundamental lesson of heavenly life. They do not think it at first so much as they feel it, and at first they feel it only a little — a sweet, innocent, precious, little feeling of this heavenly love and happiness is at first given to them. But the whole process of growing up in heaven is essentially the growth of this feeling, this consciousness, of the Lord's loving presence; and the corresponding growth of the wisdom of His pure love of others in their souls. It is not, however, an inward growth merely: as the heart grows in the love of it, and the mind in the wisdom and intelligence of it, the spiritual body also grows, in correspondence with the soul, in stature and in strength to do the works of it for the Lord and for the neighbor.

Thus even as little children they are introduced into the uses of heaven, and educated and trained in the performance of them. For nothing can exist in heaven but from use and for use. This is evident from the fact that nothing but the Lord's pure love of others can make heaven — if a particle of selfishness enters, heaven is to that extent destroyed.

Where the pure love of others reigns happiness can be found only in doing good uses for them. So even the little children are led on by this happiness of loving the Lord and their angel-mothers and friends, into growing efforts to do loving and useful services. And no efforts of love can fail in heaven; for the love is the Lord's own given to them to be as if it were their own, and, when kept pure from selfishness, His power is in it to lead into His wisdom and the doing of His works.

So work is play for the children in heaven, because it is full of the delights of love. How tireless children are in their plays here when they are doing what they love to do. Therefore education is always easy and practical there, leading directly to something which the children wish to learn how to do as an expression of their own life-love. In the kindergartens, and in the object lessons, and manual-training methods now coming into favor in this world, we find some approach to that which can exist in its perfection only in a spiritual world, where all external objects are in correspondence with internal states of thought and affection, because they are embodiments of them.

In the writings of Swedenborg illustrations are given. For instance, in the work entitled "Heaven and Hell" (No. 335), we read of children who were being taught of the Lord's resurrection, and of the glorification of His human by its union with the

Divine, when not only the story was told from the Word, but the sepulchre was also represented as far away from heaven, with the idea of the Lord in it also remotely. Then cautiously something atmospheric, like a thin vapor, was admitted into the sepulchre to signify spiritual life in baptism, for the Lord was baptized as a sign of the purification of His earthly life. Then His descent to the bound was represented and His ascent with them into heaven. In adaptation to the infantile minds of the children they were allowed to let down little cords, almost invisible, very soft and tender, by which they lightened the Lord's ascent, always with a holy solicitude that there should be nothing in the representation bordering upon anything that did not contain a spiritual and heavenly meaning.

We also read of children charmingly attired, having garlands of flowers resplendent with beautiful and heavenly colors twined about their breasts and tender arms, accompanied by their teachers, entering beautiful parks adorned with arbors; with laurel-covered walks and paths leading inward, to picture their own entrance into deeper knowledges of heavenly life; and as they advanced even the flowers over the entrance shone forth most joyously. "This indicates," Swedenborg continues, "the nature of their delights, and how they are led by means of these pleasant and delightful things into the goods of innocence and charity, which are thereby continually instilled into them by the Lord."

As education thus advances in heaven, the teachers are successively changed to meet changing needs. As in this world children pass from the innocent tenderness of infancy to the aggressive states of youth, while their guardian angels unseen must be changed from higher to lower heavens, so the children in heaven as they advance to youth develop more positive individuality, and approach states of self-assertion that border on selfishness. The boys especially enjoy testing their strength and skill with one another in generous competition for the laurels of victory. Thus their wits are sharpened, their perceptions quickened, and their judgment of various degrees of right, if not of wrong, trained. For this masters and teachers from the heavens of lower angels are required. So they pass down at length towards the world of spirits, and at times are even permitted to enter it for instruction, accompanied and protected by their angel-teachers. Then inherited tendencies to evil are permitted to appear, but without actual sin; to show them that of themselves they are evil, and that the Lord alone is good. Thus through self-humiliation they are enabled to exalt and worship the Lord. Not until this is fully accomplished can they realize their dependence upon Him and come into the innocence of wisdom. For the highest wisdom knows the deepest need of the Lord's care, and innocence is always in the love of being cared for and guided by Him.

As little babies in the innocence of ignorance they nestled in the bosoms of their angel-mothers, under the immediate care of their heavenly Father; through childhood and youth they have been kept innocent by Him and His angels while being led out of that ignorance into the knowledges of the various uses and delights of heaven; and at length their innocence can be filled with wisdom only by learning from experience this humiliating lesson of their own evils, so to realize that nothing of heaven can come from themselves; but that every bit of it must come from the Lord alone. Then, and not until then, can they submit themselves completely to Him, and be shown their own homes in the Father's house of many mansions, so to enter upon their own eternal life with Him as His angels. Thus we find that even those who grow up in heaven, like those who grow up on earth, in this sense must be converted and become as little children before they can really enter the kingdom of heaven, and have homes of their own in the Father's house of many mansions. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones, that believe in Him, should perish.

V

Heaven

REV. JAMES REED

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

— *Matthew v. 3.*

THIS is the first of the ten blessings. As such, it declares the primary condition of heavenly life and happiness. To be poor in spirit is to be humble, to be filled with the sense of one's own unworthiness, to be removed as far as possible from a state of pride and self-confidence. The essence of it is a feeling of trust in the Lord, and of entire dependence upon Him. The chief desire of those who are poor in spirit, is that the Divine will, rather than their own pleasure, should be done.

Another way in which we find this truth presented is the following:

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Here also, humility is emphasized as the essential

heavenly quality. We are plainly taught that without it no one can become an angel. It is indeed impossible for grown up men and women actually to be little children again; but, if they would fulfil the true purpose of their creation, they must show forth the principal characteristic of childhood, namely, innocence, a feeling of trustful dependence, a wish to be led by a higher power, and not by self. To the unregenerate natural man this may seem like weakness and incapacity, whereas it is a mark of the highest wisdom and strength.

Of similar import is the further teaching of our Lord: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." In these words we are again told that there is no place in heaven for those who are proud and self-righteous. It is the abode only of the meek and lowly and childlike.

Were there need, it might be shown that true humility really includes all the other elements of Christian character. One who is poor in spirit will of necessity desire to lead a life according to the Divine precepts. He will be in the state described by all the beatitudes. He will hunger and thirst after righteousness, will be merciful, pure in heart, and a peacemaker. But there is no occasion to enlarge on this point. In our general consideration of the nature of heaven the important thing for us to understand at the outset, is that what determines a

man's admission into heaven is the interior quality of his life, and not his mere outward behavior, or his professions of faith, or any other adventitious circumstances. The crucial question with regard to him is, not, How does he appear to others? but What is he in himself? This is the same as asking what his ruling love is, or by what motives he is habitually actuated. Love is the life of man, and his ruling love decides his essential character. What, then, does he *love* above all things else—good or evil? truth or falsity? the Lord and the neighbor, or self and the world? From what source does he seek his happiness? from doing good to others, or from heaping up riches, acquiring power, and securing for himself honors and fame?

The answer to these questions is also the answer to another, namely, Which is the more attractive to him, heaven or hell? Does this seem a strange question to ask? Is there any human being who really prefers hell to heaven? Is there any one who, after death, chooses hell rather than heaven for his abiding-place? Alas! there are many who make this choice. Had they not made it, there would be no hell. You and I think that we shall wish to go to heaven when we die. But that depends on whether we have learned to love heaven here and now. For to love heaven is to love heavenly things. It is to love truth, purity, and uprightness above all worldly possessions. It is to prefer the welfare and

happiness of our brother-man to our own selfish pleasure. It is to find our greatest delight in doing good without thought of reward. It is to take for our example the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." It is to live in the spirit of His words, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." May not each one of us well consider in his heart, whether he really cares for a heaven like this?

The foregoing statements all go to show that heaven is primarily and essentially a state of mind, and not an outward place. This is what our Lord meant, when He declared, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Yes, in our very hearts heaven must have its seat, before it can be truly ours in any sense. Let us not cherish the delusion that we shall wish to live in heaven after death, unless heaven has found a place within us in this world. We must carry heaven with us, if we expect to find it. There is no reason to believe that it will seem any more attractive to us hereafter, than it does at present.

Men have generally supposed that heaven was merely a beautiful paradise, into which certain per-

sons were admitted by the arbitrary decree of the Almighty. Hell also has been regarded as a place of endless torment, to which certain other persons have been condemned by the same decree. But the falsity of this belief becomes evident in the light of the Divine teaching that the kingdom of God is within man. What is our experience in this world? Does a pleasant environment always bring happiness? Or, to put the question more correctly, does it ever, by itself, bring happiness? If we reflect a little, we shall see that our answer must be an unqualified negative. All around us are men and women who enjoy every comfort and luxury which earthly life can give. They are blessed with health; they have beautiful homes, where no unsightly object offends their eyes; they are without nothing which money can procure. And yet, with all these advantages, they are often far from happy. They are living proofs of the truth of the saying, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." What they need is the influence of the kingdom of God within them. This alone will bring to them peace and contentment. This, of itself, will transform a hut into a palace, and cause the desert to "rejoice and blossom as the rose." Truly, as the poet says:—

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

Is there any ground for believing that these con-

ditions are all changed by laying aside the natural body? Can that single incident have the effect of reconstructing the whole nature? If the heart's desires have been selfish and worldly, will they all at once become unselfish and heavenly? Will men who cherish such desires wish to live in a community where the love of others rules? The Gospel teaching is that on the two great commandments hang all the law and the prophets. In other words, love of the Lord and love of the neighbor are the essential principles of orderly human life. To this rule there can be no exceptions. Wherever men may dwell, they can find true happiness only in the exercise of those loves. The Lord tells us how to show our love to Him, when He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And His commandments teach us how love to the neighbor is to be exercised. "Depart from evil and do good," is the substance of their requirements. Whence it follows that heaven, being a state of love to God and man, must be the scene of active usefulness. A life of idleness and self-indulgence can have no place there. All the angels are engaged in mutual service. Whoever is ready to live among them must likewise find his chief delight in joyous work.

This is the definite teaching of the New Church. Heaven is a heaven of uses. Being a house of many mansions, it consists of innumerable societies or communities in which those dwell together who

at heart are nearest to each other. The members of each society are united by a special bond of love and fellowship. They constitute, as it were, one spiritual family. They are joined by a common love of the same things — the same forms of usefulness. The order of heaven is beautifully pictured by that of the human body. Each society fills a place which no other society can fill, just as each bodily organ performs a function which no other organ can perform. Thus the whole heaven is benefited by the activities of each of its societies, just as the whole body is benefited by the activities of each of its members. Likewise the individual member of a society finds in it his opportunity for doing, throughout eternity, exactly that service for which his native capacity and his earthly experience have fitted him. It is a wonderful fact that from the beginning of time no two human beings have been created alike. The true inner significance of it is that each one is made to be a form, so to speak, of some particular use. In the performance of that use he realizes his own highest happiness; for, by means of it, he is able to give complete expression to the life which is peculiarly his. Thus he fills out the measure of his being, and finds his own place in the Divine plan of the universe, like every other created thing.

In thinking of the uses or functions of the angels, we need to recall what has been previously said in

these discourses about the human conditions in which they live. We have to bear in mind that they are men and women like ourselves. Their societies are just what earthly communities would be if they were administered in an orderly manner in the spirit of mutual love. They have civil affairs and ecclesiastical affairs, with persons appointed to direct them; for in heaven there are governments and worship. They have houses and homes which also need to be cared for. Schools must be provided for the children, and instruction given to other new comers from this world. The distinction of sex is fundamental—so that men continue to be men and women to be women there as here. Accordingly there are employments suited to both sexes. Even the marriage relation forms a part of the heavenly life, being based on a recognized union of heart and soul between those who were created for each other. It is free from earthly taint and gives expression to all that is best and noblest in their characters. A husband and wife, united in this spiritual marriage, are a larger and more perfect image of their Creator, than either of them can be singly. God hath joined them together; man shall not put them asunder.

So, if we would picture to ourselves a heavenly society, there will rise before our mind's eye a scene of human activity, in which love to the Lord and love to the neighbor are beautifully exemplified.

All the joys which the angels experience are born of those loves. Their associations with each other, their worship, their festivities, their recreations, their enjoyment of outward life, alike receive inspiration and delight from the unselfish service which they render to each other and to men on earth. In what sharp contrast with the ideas which have generally prevailed is this picture. Few persons, even in Christendom, have ever conceived of any other heaven than a selfish one. To breathe the sweet air of paradise, to feast with the patriarchs and apostles, to sit on thrones of glory, to sing perpetual songs of praise—these and similar things have been supposed to constitute eternal happiness. Surely no thoughtful mind can fail to perceive how shallow such conceptions are. Can we not plainly see that if, hereafter, we continue to be ourselves, every one of those so-called enjoyments, exclusively pursued and indefinitely prolonged, would grow utterly wearisome? External pleasures of any kind can never give lasting satisfaction. We do not doubt that they will exist in heaven. There will be social intercourse delightful above all that can be imagined in this world. Outward objects and phenomena will thrill the soul with a sense of beauty and harmony never known on earth. And as for singing, how can the angels keep their feelings of joy and thankfulness from breaking forth in song? The Scripture speaks truly when it mentions these

things as pertaining to heavenly life. But they are not that life itself; they are only its external incidents and accessories. The real joy of heaven, be it repeated, consists in doing good to others from a pure love for them. That love, moreover, is the Lord's own love breathed into their hearts and accepted as the spring of all their actions, according as they have shunned evil as sin against Him in obedience to His commandments.

Thus we come back to the principle previously affirmed, that heaven is, in its essence, a state of mind, and not a place. In the other life, the place where one visibly dwells, depends on the state in which he interiorly is. The real heaven is within him, and from it the outer or phenomenal heaven takes its form and character. This is the law of life in the spiritual world. All things around man are in perfect correspondence with his affections and thoughts. They give exact expression to the life which he inwardly cherishes. Hence it follows that there is absolute agreement and harmony between him and his environment. Furthermore, the environment of no two angels is precisely the same. There is a general resemblance in the conditions by which all are surrounded; but there are particular differences growing out of the differences in individual character. The heavenly societies also, like the stars, differ from each other in magnitude, and in all other ways. Yet together they constitute one uni-

versal heaven — one grand constellation — one greatest body of humanity which most perfectly reflects the Divine image and likeness.

Such is the wonderful order of heaven, as made known in the writings of the New Church. It presents heaven as the embodiment, in human beings, of the Lord's love of doing good and imparting happiness. It brings to view a life the exact opposite of that which natural and worldly men desire to live. Can we then marvel that those who, on earth, disregarding the Divine teachings and the promptings of their better nature, have acquired habits of self-indulgence and self-seeking, to say nothing of grosser evils, turn away from heaven, as possessing for them no charms? Yea, can we not readily believe that its very atmosphere of neighborly love and kindness is one they cannot breathe, filling them with torment rather than with delight? Verily those who shun that kind of atmosphere in this world can not expect to find it sweet and grateful in the other.

And yet what life is there worth living, but that of unselfish usefulness? Through its agency, as we have seen, a man is brought into the exercise of all his faculties, and enabled to fill his place in the grand scheme of creation. If we consider the subject sanely and reasonably, we cannot fail to see that there is no other way in which he can perform his part in the general economy of the universe. All the analogies of nature confirm the belief that every

human being was created to be a specific form and medium of use. This is the case with the lower animals, and with plants and minerals. We may not know the purposes for which all of them were made, but we know enough to show us that none were made without a purpose. Can it be otherwise with him under whose dominion they were placed? Was it intended that he alone among living things should be a drone and idler? These questions cannot be answered affirmatively even as regards his short life on earth. Much less can they be so answered, if we believe in his immortal life hereafter. That life is the fulfilment of his destiny, and with all its earthly limitations removed, furnishes his complete opportunity to bring forth the best that is in him. It would seem needless to add that only by embracing this opportunity can he find his true happiness. Like the olive, vine, and fig-tree in Jotham's parable, whose joy consisted in producing their different kinds of fruit, so does he experience his greatest joy in using his own special gifts for the service of mankind.

One of our Lord's parables tells of a man who made a great supper, and bade many guests. But they all with one consent began to make excuse. Each was so absorbed in his own selfish interests, that he refused the invitation. One had bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it. Another had bought five yoke of oxen, and must go

to prove them. A third had married a wife, and therefore he could not come. Is not this a transparent description of the state of those to whom heaven is offered, and who deliberately reject it? They are too self-satisfied, too much engrossed in their worldly pursuits and pleasures. Why should they care for a life of mutual and unselfish love? It is indeed wholly repugnant to them. But the invitation is extended also to others. The poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind, are summoned to the feast. Even the highways and hedges are searched for guests. Is it asked what kind of guests these are? They are those who feel their own deficiencies and their need of help. They look to the Lord for deliverance from all their evils. They wish to be led by Him in the paths of righteousness. They seek to do His will in all things. This reciprocal relationship between the Lord and men, this conjunction of their hearts and minds with His, this sharing of His joy in loving and blessing all, is what is meant by the great supper. So we end as we began: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

VI

The Lord and the Angels with Men

REV. H. CLINTON HAY

An angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them.

— *Luke ii. 9.*

MEN and angels met together in the Lord's birth. Indeed, is it not so in every birth? Does not every little one seem to bring angels with him? We do not see them, nor hear their songs rejoicing with us in the gift of a new life from the heavenly Father; but do we not feel them standing by? Does heaven ever seem so near in any other earthly experience as in that of receiving the affections of a new-born child; when the father and mother find a new tie of tenderness sweetly binding them together; when every one who approaches is drawn into this sacred circle of innocence and peace; when prophecy finds some fulfilment, saying, "A little child shall lead them."

Surely that power is not in the little child alone. He owes it not to nature which is ignorant of it, nor to man who comprehends it not; but to the Lord in whose creative hand he lies, and to the highest angels in whose midst his life begins, and in whose joy and peace he participates, before he could acquire any of his own. The gift is from the Lord; the influence, that of the angels. If we reflect upon it, we shall become more and more

deeply impressed with the fact, that such influences are supernatural—above nature; not of the body, but of the mind, the spirit. Hence, the presence of the Lord and His angels may be reasonably inferred, and might be demonstrated to the senses of a spiritual body, if we had the conscious use of them.

Francis Turner Palgrave, in his poem entitled "The Reign of Law," says:—

To matter or to force,
The all is not confined,
Beside the law of things
Is set the law of mind.
One speaks in rock and star
And one within the brain
In unison at times,
And then apart again.

The sequences of law,
We learn through mind alone,
'Tis only through the soul
That aught we know is known.
With equal voice she tells
Of what we touch and see
Within these bounds of life,
And of a life to be.
Proclaiming One who brought us hither
And holds the keys of whence and whither.

The only rational way of accounting for mental existence is to regard it as a part of the spiritual world, with its own central source of energy—to

which the sun of this world corresponds, as a center of material forces. But the essential difference is, that while material forces are manifested as heat and light in various modes of motion, spiritual forces are manifested as love and wisdom in affection and thought. Atmospheres are needed in either case, in which these forces may act. As heat and light proceed from the sun of this world by vibrations of ether, so love and wisdom must proceed from the sun of heaven by vibrations of a corresponding atmosphere. As sight here depends upon vibrations of ether, and hearing upon vibrations of air, so must thought and perception depend upon the vibrations of corresponding spiritual atmospheres. Thus it follows, that as all the phenomena of this world depend upon the sun and atmospheres of the earth, so all the phenomena of the spiritual world depend upon the sun and atmospheres of heaven: and as all the objects here consist of matter formed in and by the terminations of atmospheres condensing and coming to rest, so all the objects of the spiritual world consist of spiritual substances, formed in a corresponding way in and by spiritual atmospheres.

This gives us a substantial, objective as well as subjective, spiritual world for our souls to live in, corresponding with the material world in which our earthly bodies live. Aye, more, it shows us that both worlds are now ours; that we are living in one with the Lord and His angels, and in the other

with men. It also leads us to the rational conclusion, that we have spiritual bodies and environment in company with spiritual beings, as we have earthly bodies and environment in company with earthly beings; and which world we shall see and hear, touch and know, depends simply upon where the activities of our minds close—whether in the sensories of the material, or in those of the spiritual body.

Many of us, perhaps, are accustomed to thinking in this way of death and the life beyond; but not of the life we are now living. We are accustomed to the thought that when the earthly body is returned to the dust, the man will live on with a spiritual body, in perception of the spiritual world: which thought implies that the spiritual body has spiritual eyes, which can see objects in spiritual light; and ears, which can hear sounds vibrating in spiritual air; and the sense of touch, to feel spiritual warmth and cold, hardness and softness, roughness and smoothness—always, of course, as expressions of spiritual, not material qualities. But few of us are accustomed to thinking out clearly how all this applies to men as spiritual beings, and to their relations with the angels now; and also how it applies to the meaning of the Sacred Scriptures, which are given to teach us of spiritual things. For instance, when we read the words of our text, “An angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory

of the Lord shone round about them : and they were sore afraid." With what eyes did the shepherds see the angel of the Lord standing by them, when their earthly eyes were darkened by that Syrian night? In what atmosphere did the glory of the Lord shine round about them—that of the natural world or that of the spiritual world? With what ears—those of the natural or those of the spiritual body—did they hear the glad Christmas anthems of the heavenly hosts, singing,—

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men
In whom He is well pleased.

—LUKE ii. 14, R. V.

The same questions may be asked concerning that remarkable star which appeared at the same time to the magi in the Far East, and during many months led them across the Syrian desert. Was it occasioned by the conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn—which may occur once in eight hundred years—as some have tried to figure out astronomically, but without much success; or was it occasioned by the light of the angels in the spiritual world, which at a distance may be seen as a star? We know that the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, which led the Israelites through the wilderness, was occasioned by such a company of angels; for we read in the account of

the passage of the Red Sea, that "the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them." (Exod. xiv. 19.) And afterwards, speaking of this same phenomenon, the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. (Exod. xxiii. 20.) This is certainly an instance when the presence of the Lord and His angels with men is revealed, although not by the opening of the spiritual eyes, for an earthly cloud was made to represent the presence of the Lord and His angels in this event. But before, when Moses beheld the burning bush which was not consumed, and heard the voice of the Lord speaking, it must have been by the opening of the eyes and ears of the spiritual body: and the same must have been true afterwards of his experiences in Mount Sinai, when the patterns of the tabernacle and its sacred furnishings were shown to him, and he talked with Jehovah forty days.

Thus we might go through the Sacred Scriptures, and find evidences of the Lord and the angels constantly with men, and frequently making their presence known. Abraham entertained angels unawares; and, when tempted to sacrifice Isaac, an angel intervened to save his beloved son: and when he sent his aged servant to get a wife for him, his

charge was, "Jehovah, God of heaven . . . shall send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son from thence." (GEN. xxiv. 7.) Jacob, in turn, on his way to the same country of his father's for a wife, was granted a vision of his heavenly Father, and the angels ascending and descending. Afterwards the Lord Jesus put Himself in the place of this heavenly Father, saying to Nathaniel, "Ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (JOHN i. 51.)

That the spiritual world is always present, but can be seen only by the eyes of the spiritual body, is plainly taught in the account of the deliverance of Elisha at Dothan. His attendant was frightened when he found that they were surrounded by the horses and chariots of the Syrians: then Elisha prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 KINGS vi. 17.) The eyes that were opened manifestly were not those with which he had seen the hosts of Syrian chariots. This explains the Lord's meaning when He said, "Now that the dead are raised even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for

to Him all are living." (LUKE xx. 37, 38.) Is not the same principle to be applied to the account of the Transfiguration, when the Lord's face shone as the sun, and when Moses and Elias, long dead, were seen talking with Him in the spiritual world? and to the angels of His resurrection, seen and spoken with at the sepulchre? and to His own glorified resurrection-body, seen by many of His friends, but by none of His enemies? and, finally, to that same glorified, Divine body seen ascending into infinite union with the Father, and saying, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (MATT. xxviii. 18-20.)

If all power is His in heaven, does it not mean that He operates the sun and atmospheres of the spiritual world, that the sun of heaven is His tabernacle and proximate abode—the first emanation of His Divine love, wisdom, and power going forth to create? And if all power is His on earth, the sun and atmospheres of this world must be within His control also. He then coordinates all the forces of the universe, of both mind and matter, to the accomplishment of His blessed purposes. Well might He change water into wine, as the

Gospels show : and multiply the loaves and fishes to feed the multitudes ; walk upon the sea, and say to the raging winds, "Peace, be still" ; bid the legions of evil spirits to come out of frenzied mortals, and forgive men their sins ; heal their diseases, and raise their dead.

To thus understand the Bible as a revelation of the spiritual world, in which man now lives as to his spirit in the presence of the Lord and His angels, is not important for its own sake as an intellectual attainment ; but as a means of entering into living spiritual relations, it is of the greatest importance. The Bible may thus become the means by which men are associated with angels and conjoined to the Lord : and this is salvation ; it is eternal life—the life of heaven itself. Indeed, the Bible is thus the Divinely instituted means of making angels of men. And that is what earthly life is for : the Divine purpose in creating men on earth is to make angels of them, prepared and qualified to enjoy the uses of heaven forever.

Now can we not see what the great work of heaven is, to the accomplishment of which all the employments of the angels are directed ? The Lord's pure love of others leads Him to create men, and to provide for them eternal life, progress, and happiness with Him in loving and serving others. Thus He unites them to Himself, if they are willing, and associates them with one another in

this — His own great work of love. What a vast work it is, and what divisions of labor and classifications of uses it calls for among men and angels : and how close together it brings this world and the other ; and how interdependent it makes them. No soul can come into existence without an earthly mother, and, in every instance but one, without an earthly father. This mediation is indispensable to the passing of life from the Infinite into finite forms. And while the earthly body is equally indispensable as a mould for the spirit, still the child himself is a spirit, created in the spiritual world. Hence, the angels have even a greater work to do than the parents, in the reception and care of the little child from God. Even the Lord Himself, when He would become a Divine Man among men and angels, must depend upon both for the finite receptacles of His infinite life. Hence He caused Himself to be born of Mary in the midst of angels as well as men. “He bowed the heavens and came down,” and took to Himself, as a Divine Man, all power in heaven as well as on earth — all the powers of angels as well as of men : and that is what He came to bestow upon us — all the powers of angels as well as of men.

Hence we may conclude that multitudes of angels must be working with Him from the very inception of human life to its end here, and thence onward forever in heaven. Not a few of them are needed

to watch over the spiritual formation of multitudes of unborn children, and to induce the most tender and holy states of thought and affection possible upon their mothers: for it is known that the states of the mother may then be impressed upon her offspring; and there are hereditary conditions, also, that need to be tempered and mitigated as far as is consistent with the future freedom and welfare of the child and man. The peculiar states of happiness and exaltation, which mothers often experience at such times, are due to these ministrations of the angels; the loftiest examples of which are found in the inspired songs of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and of Mary, the mother of the Lord.

Multitudes of the highest angels also, who always behold the face of the Father in heaven, are busy in guarding and keeping the new-born babies nestling in their mothers' bosoms. They enjoy them as much as the earthly mothers can, and as much regard them as their own; while they more clearly realize that they belong in truth to the Lord alone. They see to it that every one who approaches in this world shall have the tenderest and most innocent affections awakened: and they see to it that no evil spirits shall approach in the other world; and what is done there is so much more important than what is done here, that even when babies are given to wicked parents, in the worst possible earthly surroundings, the angels still succeed in

filling the soul of the little one with love and innocence and purity ; and forever after, they work with the Lord to see that these blessed things *remain*, stored up in the soul as the kingdom of God within us : so that no matter into what evils and miseries we may afterwards be led by earthly associates, under the influences of the hells ; still we may repent, be converted, and become as the little child we once were, and return to the Lord, and let Him lead us back into the company of His angels again, and into the place in His household which He prepares for us, and thus save us.

It matters not, on the other hand, how well we are born, how carefully nurtured and pleasantly surrounded in this world, we all repeat the experiences of this journey out of the spiritual Eden of our infancy, among the highest angels ; in spirit we pass down through the heavens, and out into the world of spirits ; where we may be tempted, and tried, and delivered from the evil heredity which is shared by every one since "the fall"—since sin brought a heritage of evil tendencies from the fathers to their children. And even if there had been no sin in human history, still this unconscious journey for the soul, from heaven to earth, would be necessary for the development of freedom and rationality, which are essential to individuality.

In all this journey down and out from the garden planted Godward in the soul, we need and we have

constantly the care of the Lord and His angels. No matter how parents and associates may fail us in what they should do for us on earth, the angels never fail to do for us all that we are willing to receive in the heavenly planes of our souls: and they do innumerable services far beneath our consciousness. But they never force us, nor do any violence to our freedom and reason. Evil spirits would do this, if they were permitted: operating behind our consciousness, they would drag us down into their abodes of selfishness and cruelty: but the angels continually guard us from them; their first care always is, to keep our wills free to choose between right and wrong, and our reasons clear to determine truth and falsity. If we ever lose these faculties, and come under the sway of evil spirits for a season, it is when we neglect our relations to the Lord and the angels, and in selfishness permit evil appetites, desires, or passions to blind us, and lead us away captive. Evil spirits never lose an opportunity to arouse what is evil in our natures: they lead us away from heaven by insinuating, as far as they are permitted to do so, their own lusts for the pleasures of hell. So they lead men by avarice, by anxieties, by pride and selfish ambition, by lusts for dominion, and by impure desires; feeding them with their own infernal delights, if they yield to the temptation to sin, until they get them into their power. Then they deprive them of the

freedom and reason of heaven; as the Lord says, "Everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." (JOHN viii. 34.) The complications of wrongdoing become a serious bondage, even in this world; for one sin leads to another, and earthly companionship in sin is often exacting; still, all this is external, we can break away from it if we will: but the bondage of sin to evil spirits is far worse; it is internal—of the will itself and the understanding; the power to will and think differently from our invisible captors is lost—"a bad habit," we call it, when, in truth, it is a dreadful spiritual servitude, the escape from which is possible only by looking to the Lord for deliverance. When we sincerely pray to Him for help, He can give us light out of heaven by means of His angels, and power, thus, to do His will, instead of that of our spiritual enemies. Then are fulfilled the words, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (LUKE xv. 10.) It is the Lord's joy, which the angels feel in sympathy with Him, when the prodigal son returns; when the lost sheep is found, in the heart returning to His care; when the lost treasure is recovered, in the returning rationality of His child.

Evil spirits are not permitted to see and know the men whom they control; they would do them greater harm, and hurry them on to destruction, if they were; for they are full of hatred, and burn with the

lust of destroying. But if men seek intercourse with them by means of trances, it cannot always be prevented. Hence, we may understand the dangers of modern spiritism. Good spirits do not often speak with men, for generally it would interfere with a man's freedom and the use of his own reason, if they did; he would stand in awe of, and grow dependent upon, the supernatural. Therefore, even the Lord hides Himself from His disciples, as a rule, saying, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." (JOHN xvi. 7.) The Comforter is the hidden power of the Lord's own wisdom, working from His love, in the souls of men and angels. So the angel of His presence is sent to save us, and to keep us in the way to heaven.

Our guardian angels know us. It is their office to inspire charity and faith—that is, heavenly affections and thoughts—so that we can enjoy, and be interested in, what is good and true. Therefore they constantly watch our delights to see in what directions they are turning, and to moderate them, and turn them from evil to good, as far as our free-will permits. When evil spirits infuse evil affections and false thoughts, they immediately insinuate good and true ones, to offset them and keep us free. (See Heavenly Arcana, No. 5992.)

So constant is this operation of the Lord's Holy Spirit through the angels, and the perversions of it through the hells, that man has never a thought or

feeling which is interiorly separated from one side or the other of the spiritual world. He can no more think and feel without these hidden vibrations of the spiritual atmospheres, in which he is living, than he can see and hear in this world, without the invisible vibrations of ether and air. And we should remember, that it is the Lord who is the Center and Source of all these powers in heaven and on earth ; so that, whether they reach us through angels or through evil spirits, they never escape the control of His Divine Providence. All depends, therefore, upon our attitude towards Him—whether we obey and love or disobey and hate Him : as we do one or the other, we shall be associated with angels in the atmospheres of the heavens, or with devils in the atmospheres of the hells. Love of Him determines everything in the spiritual world. We shall know and live with those we love, and we shall love those who feel as we do about the Lord and His kingdom of service to loved ones.

In closing, let us see the application of this to our loved ones who have gone before us into the consciousness of the spiritual world, and left us behind in the consciousness of this. If they love the Lord they are living with His angels, and in due season are themselves becoming angels. If we really love them, and wish to live with them, we must learn to love the Lord and live with Him, as they do. Then they will be among our guardian angels now. They can still live with us, and minis-

ter to us in heavenly ways ; and we can still live with them, and minister to them in earthly ways : so close and interdependent are the relations of heaven and earth. "Heaven is the Lord's throne, and the earth is His footstool." All inspiration comes from the Lord through the heavens, but all realization must begin on earth, before it can rise to heaven and give joy. The poet's song, the artist's picture, the artisan's invention — everything that makes for human progress and happiness, must be conceived, finited, formed, and born here, in the travails of earth, before it can rise into the glories of heaven. Even Divine Revelation, the Word of God, must be given so : first to men, in the letter ; and then to angels, in its ever-unfolding spirit. Aye, even the Word-made-flesh must first be born a little babe of Bethlehem, before He can grow, and ascend to His throne — the Divine Man of heaven and earth.

So the angels rejoiced with Mary and the shepherds ; so they rejoice with every mother and every household, which receives a little child that is to become an angel. And no mother need ever fear the loss of her child by death ; no husband or wife, the loss of a beloved companion ; for we still may live with, and for, our loved ones in the eternal realities and services of heaven ; because heaven is always open to receive everything good and true and loving from the earth ; because the angels of God are always ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

VII

The Lord's Merciful Care of the Evil

REV. H. CLINTON HAY

For He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.

— *Luke vi. 35.*

IN teaching His disciples how to regard and treat the evil, the Lord reveals His own attitude towards them, His own love and merciful care of them. This is needed to complete the revelation of the Father: for in the Old-Testament Scriptures in the letter, and in earthly experiences from which the letter is formed, there are appearances to the contrary.

For instance, in the allegory of the origin of evil, in the garden of Eden, it appears as if the Lord drove man out from the happy home He had given to him; when, in truth, man's own sin of disobedience drove him out of his own paradise of innocence and peace. Then the flaming sword, to guard the way of return, appears to be a sign of Divine wrath, when in reality it is a symbol of Divine mercy, for it prevents the profanation of holy things, which would bring greater evils and distress, if it were permitted. In the wilderness journey, when the Israelites were obedient, the pillar of cloud and fire must have seemed full of Divine beneficence and angelic guardianship; but when they were disobedient, it must have seemed to them sombre by day, and lurid by

night, with the Divine displeasure. So the Psalmist sometimes sings, and Prophecy is often spoken and written, as if God were "angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm vii. 11), and would "rain snares, and fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest" upon them; as if the Lord's soul hated them, and panted for revenge, and delighted in the thought of punishing and tormenting them.

If, however, we turn to the Fourth Gospel, the loving gospel of the beloved John, we find a revelation of the truth underlying these appearances of the Old-Testament letter: "For," we read, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him, should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (JOHN iii. 16, 17.) From the lips of that Son we are taught to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us; that we may be children of our Father which is in heaven: "for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (MATT. v. 45.) And in the forgiving, patient, perfect love of the Son — mocked, buffeted, scourged, and crucified — we have an exhibition of the Father's merciful care of the evil.

In the past, not realizing that He and the Father

are one, men were misled by the appearances of the letter, and supposed the Father to be a God of wrath, capable of the most cruel treatment of the wicked; but they regarded the Son as a God of mercy, ready to lay down His life for the evil, to satisfy that wrath. Now, however, all are being led to see that the Son's love is the Father's dwelling in Him, and making itself known by that Divine-human instrumentality; and that the death on the cross was to satisfy, not wrath but love—the heavenly Father's pure, unselfish, infinite, perfect love of all His children, which could be satisfied only by laying down life itself for them.

This laying down of His life in self-sacrificing love is no new thing with Him. He has always done it for His children, and the way in which they receive it, and use it, determines whether it shall form heaven or hell, in them and about them. His death on the cross was only the ultimate earthly form of a process to which He had been submitting His life ever since the beginning of evil. To the selfish the cross is a symbol of death; but to the loving it is a symbol of the resurrection to heavenly life; for it is only by loving and laying down the life in the service of others, that worthy living can begin. Hence the Lord's words: "He that doth not take his cross and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (MATT. x. 38, 39.)

To lay down the life for His sake, then, is to live for the sake of His pure love. This forms heaven in the soul. His only purpose in creating is thus to give His own life and love to men, that they may receive it, and make it their own, and possess the heavenly blessings of it. But love cannot be forced into a human soul. If a man is to enjoy the delights of loving he must be led to do it in freedom and in accordance with reason — he must do it as of himself; notwithstanding the fact that the will, the understanding, and the power are constantly given by his Creator.

Hence evil is of man's choosing and devising. It is wholly against the will and wisdom of the Lord. It is an unavoidable permission; for the same condition which makes heaven possible, also makes its opposite possible. The essential difference between heaven and hell depends simply upon this — whether the life which the Lord lays down for men, is by men again laid down for His sake or not. In the fulness of His love He gives it freely to them, and provides all the conditions necessary for its use, and growth into heavenly forms of character and fruitfulness. Yes, He watches over every one, and determines changing conditions according to the needs of each, in this world and the other; directing His guardian angels, and controlling evil spirits. For He "is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His work." (Ps. cxlv. 9.)

Thus "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and on the unjust." For the same shining of the earthly sun results in the growth of both the wheat and the tares, of both the wholesome plants which nourish life, and the poisonous ones which destroy it. The same sun gives life to the fierce wolves, bears, leopards, and other ravenous beasts, as to the tender lambs and shepherd's dog, the faithful horse, the patient ox, and other creatures which are helpful to man, and friendly to one another. Aye, the same sun and showers provide for the earthly lives, health, and wealth of good and bad men alike—the life, the health, the wealth are the same for all, but whether they shall be turned to good or evil uses depends upon the vital principle ruling in the recipient forms.

So is it with the shining of the sun of heaven and the refreshing showers of the spiritual atmospheres: the shining is of pure Divine love and its wisdom; the showers are of the practical truths of life, given in Divine Revelation; but whether they will be turned to heavenly or infernal uses depends upon the principle of love or selfishness which rules in the heart of the recipient.

There are real growths in the spiritual world, as well as in the natural. All creation in both worlds is by growths, and the results in both are substantial; but in the spiritual world they are more abiding, more permanent, living, immortal, and imperishable.

Spiritual substances take on enduring forms by their very nature, for their uses are eternal.

Think, then, of what a difference it must make even now, whether man chooses to let the ruling principle in his soul be the Lord's pure love of others, or his own natural love of self. It may make little or no difference in the appearances of his life in this world; he may be just as gentlemanly and respectable, cultivated and rich in earthly things, from selfish as from unselfish motives. Indeed, he may be more so; for it is easier to be selfish, and selfishness, when not opposed, becomes a stronger motive than the poor struggling love of others ever can be on earth. He may be pious even, and hold a high position in the church, from selfish motives, as did the Pharisees of old. But in the spiritual world, that ruling principle must be turning the sunshine of heaven into the fires of hell—not literal, material fires, but spiritual forces which form evil and dreadful conditions, instead of good and beautiful ones. Instead of the wholesome plants and fragrant flowers of heaven, must be springing up poisonous and noxious weeds; instead of lambs and doves, must be wolves and serpents; instead of palaces and pleasant homes, must be ruins and hovels, and caves in arid deserts; instead of the beautiful spiritual bodies of angels must be growing the hideous deformities of evil spirits; and instead of heavenly garments, there must be filthy rags.

It is too dreadful to contemplate, and still, we should face it until our souls grow strong against it, and the resolution comes to shun it, and live the more earnestly for heaven. In the past, men secured earnestness in a religious life by the doctrines of literal hell-fire and torment. The simple-hearted practised some self-denial, controlled evil appetites, and gave themselves up to the Saviour's care, on this account. And for this reason also they were deeply concerned about the eternal welfare of their loved ones and their fellow men.

It was a crude misconception of a great truth of Divine Revelation. By the "worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched" the Bible means to teach us of the evil affections and false thoughts which distress the soul. They are forms and receptacles of spiritual forces, which correspond to the natural forces known here in fire and corrosion. As fire and worms may destroy earthly bodies, so evil affections and false thoughts are spiritually destructive. Not that the soul can ever die, but the spiritual forces which fill it with the warmth of love and the light and life of wisdom in heaven, when perverted and falsified, fill it with fires of self-love that burn and finally cannot be quenched, and with worms of evil principles that corrode and cannot die. And because outward things must be an expression of inward states in the spiritual world, these things actually exist and appear there. The

angels see them just as they are, when they look down into the abodes of the evil; but the evil themselves do not see them in the same light: for it is of the merciful care of the Lord that they shall not suffer farther than is necessary to keep them from greater evils and suffering. Hence they love the evils that torment them, and cherish the expression of them as far as the re-actions of suffering will permit. Serpents and other fierce things that may sting the hand which strokes them are their pets.

Nevertheless, we should not close our eyes to the lessons which the Word of the Lord is intended to teach us: we should still know that the spiritual world is a most real and substantial one, with outward as well as inward forms of existence, with a heaven of love unspeakably more glorious and satisfying than a material paradise ever could be, and a hell of selfishness unspeakably more dreadful and wretched than one of material fire and worms ever could be.

The world needs to know this more than anything else, perhaps; for there is a widespread tendency now, to think that evil is not real, that it is an illusion of some kind, or that it is undeveloped good. It is true that we often suffer from the illusion of thinking evils good, but that does not make them less real and harmful when our hearts are wedded to them. It is also true that there are evils of ignorance, which are innocently entertained by children and the simple, until they can be taught better: but

then the evils are not developed into good, but must be shunned as sins against the Lord. Only lesser *goods* can be developed into greater; and the more *evils* are developed the greater evils they become. The reason for this is, because all goods and all evils really exist in the spiritual world; and the goods belong to the Lord and heaven, while the evils belong to hell. The more goods and evils are developed the farther apart they go from each other, because they proceed in opposite directions in the spiritual world; one, ever towards the Lord, and the other, ever away from Him. Does this not throw light upon the meaning of the reply made to the rich man of the parable, when he asked that Lazarus might be sent from heaven, to dip his finger in water to cool his tongue; for he was tormented in the flames of his own evils. Abraham answered from afar: "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they which would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us." (LUKE xvi. 26, R. V.) This great gulf fixed is not in the nature of earthly space, but in that of the opposition of selfishness to love—of evil to good.

In this great gulf, as we have seen in earlier discourses, is that region of the spiritual world in which we are now living, and in which we shall awaken to consciousness when we are separated from the earthly body. Thus we are now in a situation

to receive influences from the angels of heaven on the one hand, and from evil spirits on the other. It is by constantly watching over these influences, to keep them in equilibrium, that the Lord preserves our freedom. As long as this continues we may choose for ourselves a home with the angels, or with evil spirits. And in order that this choice may be made rationally, from a knowledge of both, both find expression in the lives of men and women on earth; and, at different times, in our own thoughts and affections.

So the great battle between good and evil, truth and falsity, right and wrong, is continually going on in the world of spirits. It is a battle between heaven and hell for the souls of men: and the evidences of it are constantly about us and within us—in the newspapers we read of it; in the streets, in the markets, in the homes, in our own experiences, daily, hourly we may observe it. In what throes of revolution, at this moment, is Russia on account of it! How terrible it is when the hells seem to be getting the upper hand! What massacres in the East! What “graft” and divorces among the respectable in the West; what drunkenness, degradation, and violent crimes in the “slums”!

It was when the hells were becoming victorious by means of the too frequent consent of sinful humanity; and the heavens were being closed, so that the angels could no longer find access to men's

hearts ; and so the equilibrium essential to freedom was being lost ; that the Lord threw Himself into the breach, and in person, alone, met all the infernal hosts ; conquered them, and brought them under His own immediate control. This was His great work of redemption ; not to meet and satisfy any Divine wrath, as we have seen, but to meet and control the wrath of man and of evil spirits ; and make it praise Him for His merciful care. This is the meaning of His temptations in the wilderness : they are to teach us of all His combats with the hells ; they were threefold because the hells, like the heavens, are threefold. In the wilderness He refused to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger, to picture His resistance to all the evils that assault the flesh, seeking the disorderly gratification of natural appetites and desires. On the mountain He refused to worship, or desire, the evil use of the kingdoms of this world and their glory — riches, power, dominion, social, industrial, and political preeminence, for its own sake in this world. On the pinnacle of the temple He refused to seek selfish exaltation by means of Divine things — piety, religion, and the church. So He met the devils and satans of all the hells in succession ; and laid down His life — all that the natural, human heart craves selfishly of life on earth — for their sakes, as well as for the sake of the heavens. On the cross it all culminated in what appeared to be their

victory of death, but it was the victory of the higher over the lower life — the victory of love over selfishness, of good over evil. So the hells were restrained, the freedom of the angels to minister to men defended, and the equilibrium of men protected.

All of this was just as kind and merciful to the hells as to the heavens and the earth. Evil spirits, like evil men, need restraint and control, or they would rush into greater and greater evils, which by the spiritual law of compensation, or reaction — the law of cause and effect applied to evil — would bring suffering greater and greater, until it would become unendurable. Therefore, this Divine work of redemption — which the Lord wrought historically by His assumption and glorification of the human, through earthly birth, life, and death — He is continually doing, in that glorified Divine-Human for each individual. He never lets a single child of His pass beyond His loving and wise care; even though that child refuses the love and happiness of heaven and chooses instead the selfishness and miseries of hell. Whittier did not overestimate the Eternal Goodness when he wrote :

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

That is the song of the good heart ; it is like the Psalmist's adoring cry, "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there : if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there." (Ps. cxxxix. 8.) One who utters such songs never will make his abode in the hells ; he will live in a consciousness of the Lord's loving presence in the heavens. But evil spirits cannot endure that consciousness ; for it would be to them the consciousness of the dreadful contrast between their selfishness and His love. Therefore, by the law of opposites, they flee from Him — and as far away as He will permit. As he tells us in the Gospels, they cry "to the mountains, Fall on us ; and to the hills, Cover us." (LUKE xxiii. 30.)

This is the first act of His mercy towards those who pass down from the world of spirits, by their own free choice to make their final abode with their like in the hells — He lets them deny, forget, and ignore Him. The Psalmist's words are thus fulfilled, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." And, together with Himself, He lets them forget all the truths that they have ever known about His kingdom ; so that they may suffer no stings of remorse, no pangs of conscience. To gratify their love of ruling over others for the sake of selfish dominion, he lets them rule over one another — some in higher and some in lower positions of authority and power. This they bring about by struggling with one another, until the

strong get the mastery over the weak ; and each one learns his place by experiences of victory or defeat, in which he has found cruel delight in the one case, or suffering and humiliation in the other.*

Thus they have their pleasures and their pains of selfishness ; but none of the delights of love. They know nothing of sympathy, compassion, and devotion to the happiness of their friends. They settle down rather into a dogged submission to existing conditions, compelling such services from one another as they can ; burning with mutual hatreds, which they dare not express beyond the limits where repeated defeats and punishments have taught them that they cannot go. It is not unlike the conditions of selfish and evil living here on earth, when the fear of punishment of some kind, or the hope of reward, is the incentive to good order, or the restraint upon bad order, keeping it from becoming worse ; it is what such life would quickly become, if the Lord's love and the influences of the angels were to be withdrawn.

*Swedenborg says : "When a spirit directs his course to his hell, and enters it, he is received, at first, in a friendly manner, so that he believes that he has come among friends ; but this continues for a few hours only, during which he is explored as to his astuteness and ability. When this exploration is accomplished they begin to infest him by various means, and with increasing severity and vehemence. After infestations, they afflict him with cruel punishments, until he is reduced to a state of slavery." (Heaven and Hell, No. 574.)

In the other world, out of pure mercy, they do, indeed, appear to be withdrawn and separated from those who hate them and wish to be separated from them; but it is only an appearance. He who bade His disciples pray for their enemies, and do good to them on earth, bids them do the same as angels in heaven. We are taught that His angels are so filled with His love, that for the sake of saving a soul from hell they would make no account of death; and if they could they would willingly endure hell itself for such a soul. (Heavenly Arcana, No. 2077.)

It is sometimes asked, "If the angels know about the hells, if they know of even one soul in misery, how can they be happy in heaven?" If we could understand the happiness of pure love we would not ask this question. Compassion is one of the richest affections of love, giving deep joy. The angels are not seeking happiness for themselves, they are seeking opportunities to lay down their lives in the service of others; and the deeper the need, the deeper their compassion and eagerness to help. Evil spirits in the other world are generally no more conscious of their ministrations than we are in this world; but, nevertheless, they are constantly receiving protection from the cruelties of one another; and the miseries of their own cruel hearts are being constantly alleviated, by the loving and wise ministrations of the angels. Moreover, they

are led in this manner to perform some uses, even to the heavens ; in return for which bread, or satisfactions, from heaven are given to them. And while they are not the satisfactions of loving the Lord, nor of loving the neighbor, nor of loving the uses of order for their own sake, and so are not the satisfactions of the angels in any degree ; still, they are the satisfactions of order and usefulness, which make life precious even in the hells.

And the Lord Himself, hidden from their consciousness in still deeper planes of their being, in the tenderness of His infinite love and wisdom, continually gives His own life to them, and permits them to pervert it, and find some evil satisfaction in it — the same kind of satisfaction that His enemies have always found in crucifying Him. Does it make Him unhappy to thus lay down His life for them, to thus do good to the unthankful and the evil ? Did it make Him unhappy, when the earthly body, which He had assumed from Mary, hung dying upon the cross ; when the last throes of human selfishness, inherited through her, perished, because He refused to cherish them in company with the hells ; and when His own pure love descended to minister in its fulness to angels, and to men, and to evil spirits ?

It is His joy thus to minister to the angels, and to know all that is in them — all their delights, by their continual cooperation with Him in the order and

beauty of heaven. It is His joy to know all about men by their turnings to and from Him, to lead them, and prepare them for the eternal homes which they freely choose for themselves. And is it not His joy, with equal tenderness and devotion, to minister to evil spirits — not to punish them, nor cast them off and destroy them, because they are unthankful and evil — but to have compassion on them, and minister to them out of the Divine treasures of His own life; and know all about them and their needs, from their perpetual striving, struggling, resistance, and repugnance — the reaction of their evils and falsities to His good and truth, and, therefore, to Himself? (See True Christian Religion, No. 61.) Out of all this, well can He bid us learn to love our enemies, and bless them that curse us, and do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that spitefully use us, and persecute us; that we may be the children of our Father, which is in heaven.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled.” “In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (JOHN xv. 11; xvi. 33.)

